Vancouver Island ST Association

October 1987 Volume 1, Number 10

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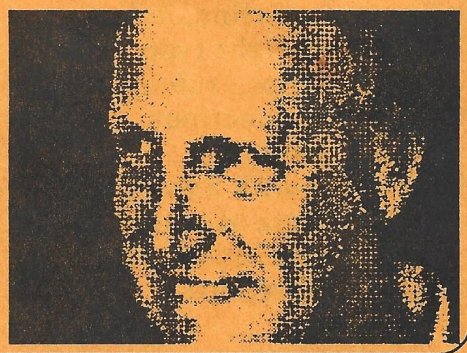
Congratulations Sylvia!

Sylvia Hanna won 1st prize in a Clip-Art contest sponsored by ST-Log and Batteries Included. See Sylvia's Corner. Well done Sylvia!

EDITORIAL

The Mega ST is here, and can be seen at A&B Sound. The Mega ST comes in an attractive casing in the now familiar grey ATARI colour. The casing is about 2" high and 14" square and is reinforced with specially designed internal ribs. The reinforcing enables the user to position a monitor on top without fear of damaging the inside. The keyboard is detachable and connected to the chassis via a shielded, coiled cable to a jack on the left-hand side. The keyboard is about the same size and layout as the 1040ST without half of the ribbed back. But it is of course not by looks that a keyboard should be judged. It is by feel and touch. And the feel and touch of the keys has been greatly improved. If you don't want the keyboard in your lap, you can place the keyboard on a table using the two retractable feet on the underside for adjusting the typing angle. The doublesided diskdrive is front loaded through an aperture on the right-hand side of the faceplate.

The Mega STs come in 1, 2 and 4 Mb versions. That is a phenomenal 4,000,000 bytes of memory, and they can be expanded to 16 Mb. The model at A&B Sound is the 4 Mb version and is retailing for around $3500. These new STs were supposed to have the blitter chip installed, but the one at A&B Sound does not have this chip installed. What it does have is the Twister formatting concept and an internal battery backed-up clock with autoboot clock-setting code in ROM.



John Russow

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The next ST technical SIG meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 17 from 1pm to 4pm. The meeting will be held at 920 Rowils Cresent. Those with software or hardware interests are invited to attend. For more details call Robert at 478-3075 between 9:30pm and 11pm.

If you have not noticed yet, the new ST Mega computers have arrived. The ST4 packs a whopping 4 megabytes of memory. That 4 megabytes will be put to good use when the Atari SLM-804 laser printer arrives on the scene. Most laser printers on the market today, especially the ones that feature the PostScript page description language have 1.5 to 2.5 megabytes of RAM memory for composing a page of text and graphics and 1 to 2 megabytes of ROM memory that contains the fonts and programs to run the laser printer. The SLM-804 has no memory but uses the memory of the ST4. Without having this extra memory in the laser printer it's cost is greatly reduced. Having the laser software in the ST will mean it will be easy to update software and add new fonts. The laser printer was demonstrated in Vancouver at the end of September. The laser printer can be used with existing ST520s and ST1040s but look to upgrading the amount of memory in these machines if you wish to do anything serious.

The ST4 will be of great interest to the muscians out there who are using MIDI instruments. Four megabytes of memory can hold enough MIDI information for several hours of music.

With the ST4, one can have several applications in memory simultaneously. Say you were writing a report in WordPlus and needed a graph to show company sales, you could switch to VIP, generate the graph and then switch back to WordPlus to paste the graph into your document.

The ST4 is also good news to hardware developers. The ST4 has a card connector for adding hardware. The possiblities are endless. Look for cards that will connect the ST4 to high resolution video monitors, increase the computing power by adding 68020 microprocessor and memory, networking STs, etc. There is a lot of commercial software available for the ST. There is a list on the Atari BBS that lists 1338 titles (as of August 7,1987).

Talking of BBS, many people have called me to ask if there is a BBS for the Atari ST in Victoria. The answer is unfortunately, not yet. To provide uploading and downloading of software a hard disk is required. A floppy-based BBS can be set up in about a week but it would be limited to messages and file transfer capabilities. Does anyone want to set one up? If so give me a call.

Robert Fraser

1st Word 2.02 vs WordWriter 2.0

WordWriter and 1stWord plus are now miles ahead of the other word proccesing programs for the ST, and it has become more and more difficult to choose between them. In the US it is not so digfficult, since 1stWord +, from UK, is not available there. Poor chaps, eh.

Following is a list of features for WordWriter, curtesy of Robert Beaupre (A&B Sound):

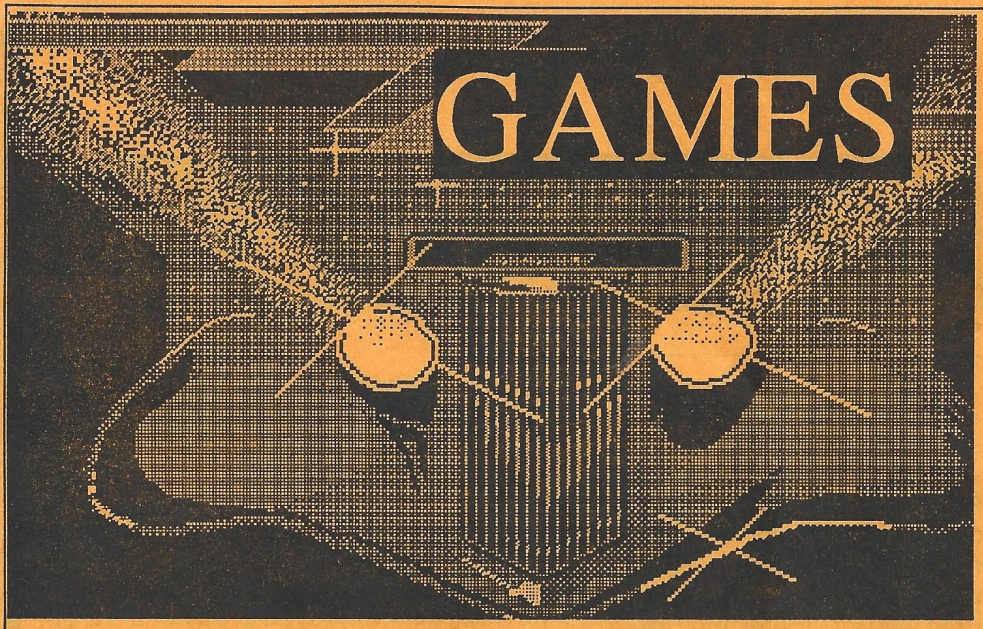
* 85,000 word dictionary. (real time or later), (add to dict.)
* Thesaurus.(synonyms)
* Integrated outliner.
* Fonts: underline, italics, bold face, light type superscript, subscript.
* Keyboard functions. (quick keys)
* Interface with Swift Calc and ST Data Manager to create form letters and statistical reports
* Built-in Printer Interface.
* Full Page Layout Control.
* Printer tutorial.
* Select Printer.
* Open four windows.
* Quick Format
* Start and End Block: (f-10)
* Cut, Paste, (F-8)
* Use of alternate keys:

The above features are almost the same for 1stWord plus, except that 1stWord does not have a Thesaurus, an outliner, nor can it interface with Swiftcalc or Data Manager .

What 1stWord has that WordWriter does not, is a Graphics mode that now works perfectly. On the sample document there is a Tiger's head, created with GemPaint, inserted in the middle of the text and it looks great.

Both programs can perform mail-merge functions. WordWriter does it by counting from top to bottom in a data file.Therefore, the data file information has to be inserted in the same way. That is to say, that the mailing list, that you want to merge with a letter for example, must be entered from top to bottom, with the NAME first, the ADDRESS second and so on. 1stWord does it by counting from left to right. Therefore, the NAME is entered first on the line, the ADDRESS second, and so on. separated with commas , no spaces. They both use the return key to tell the computer that what follows is a new file.

In summary, if you need pictures in your documents, choose 1stWord. If you need a thesaurus and an outliner choose WordWriter. Other than that, try them both, and go for the old "this one feels better". WordWriter is a little less expensive than 1stWord plus.



SHANGHAI

Computer gaming can be a drag...what with rehashed shootem-ups, minor variations on adventure themes, and myriad versions of bored... I mean board...games. But Shanghai has changed all that.

Shanghai gets its inspiration from Mah Jongg, an ancient Chinese game. You have a "dragon" of tiles stacked in five layers. As in the card game Concentration, you must remove tiles from the stack by matching pairs, which is not as easy as it sounds, because only "free" tiles can be taken from the pile--a tile is "free" if no other tile is on top of it and it is not blocked by another tile from sliding off the stack sideways.

As in most solitaire games, you may have a variety of moves from which to choose, and making them in the wrong order may prevent you from completing a board.

There are four ways to play the game, some of which allow additional players to enjoy the fun. Excellent mouse control gives the game a very smooth "feel," and the outstanding ST graphics impart a level of realism and beauty seldom found in strategy games.

Shanghai is a rare treasure in a cave of clones; I give it my highest recommendation. ($45 US)

Andy Eddy

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP KARATE

The program is supplied on two single-sided disks, and the boot sequence involves firing the program up from Disk 1, then placing Disk 2 in the drive when promnpted to do so. Unfortuanately, if you so much as touch the keyboard before being prompted to insert the second disk, the program crashes.

Epyx confirms the presence of this bug, and will include a "kata for avoidance" in subsequent releases of the software.

Once the program has loaded, there's the user interface to contend with. Each of 16 possible states of the joystick (eight basic directions combined with button press) translates to an attack or movement. Moreover, the control template flips mirror-fashion, depending on whether your figure is facing left or right.

When one is finally ready to fight, the action is nothing short of spectacular. the two figures move, leap, strike, and block with the same terrifying speed that one encounters in real freestyle combat, and the results of this violence-right down to the eloquent look of surprise on a man's face as he crumbles to the mat- are depicted with awesome attention to detail. add sound effects out of a Chuck Norris movie, a plethora of humorous, animated backgrounds (I like the camels that walk along the horizon in the Egypt scene, and the neon Can-Can girls ; though you may prefer the Tokyo-Osaka express or the Venetian gondolas or...), a white- bearded referee, and a bouncy score and you have a game that fails to become addictive only because it is so compelling to the concentration. ($40 US)

John Jainschigg

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HINTS & NEWS SHORTS

BUILT YOUR OWN HARD DISK ?

Supra Corporation has released their proprietary hard disk interface and boot software for the ST for $120 US. This should mean that you can built your own system According to the add in the "Explorer" all "you add is a surplus hard disk, controller and case for a complete system".

But wait a minute isn't a power supply needed? I think so. Also needed would be cables and plugs. Theese questions and more I have raised with the Corporation, and untill I hear back from them we can't tell you how to built one, or how much it will cost. I can however give you an idea of how much it's going to cost:

Interface and software	$120.00
20 Mb Hard disk w/control	$300.00
150W Power supply	$ 75.00
Cables and case	$ 25.00
TOTAL	$520.00
converted to Canadian	$700.00

The Supra Corporation retails their complete 2o Mb system for $700 US or $950 Cdn. You could then save as much as $250.

If the information I asked for is in before the next issue. I will tell you exactly what you need to built your own Hard drive system.

IMAGE SCANNER

Seymour-Radix have designed a scanner that will turn any Atari ST and a graphics-capable printer into a high-resolution image scanner.

The device is described as "a light pipe that sticks on to the printhead" and takes full advantage of the highest vertical resolution mode that the printer is capable of. It captures 256 gray levels, works in all screen resolutions, and allows nine levels of magnification and reduction.

You can see it for yourself at A&B Sound. There is at the moment a small problem attaching the foil to the printhead, but the sales staff are confident that it will be solved shortly. The image scanner is selling for $160 minus 10% for club members.

MAGIC SAC

Last month Data Pacific released version 4.36 for their emulator. This month they released version 4.52. This, then, becomes the 8th time that Data Pacific has updated their software since spring of 86. Don't you wish more software manufacturer would do that? This version is a complete update, and therefore it is neccessary for registered owners to send in their original disk together with $20 US. This version permits the user to configure his hardware setup, and then run the Magic software directly witout having to go through GEM.

This version also allows you to use your ST hard-disk drive with your Magic Sac.

Other features include a conversion program, which permits you to download Mac software with your favourite ST communications program and then convert them to a Magic formatted disk.

REVOLUTIONARY HYPERCARD FOR THE MAC

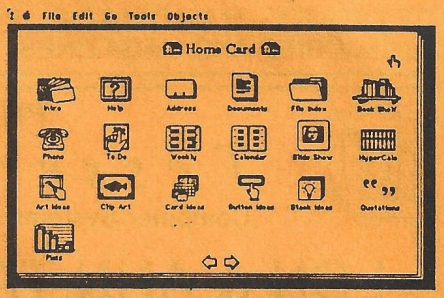
This stunning macintosh software, now supplied free with every machine, polevaults today's standards and foreshadows the future that technologists have been painting. The Information Age has come of age.

Hypercard is not a database, a spreadsheet, or a word processor - although you can file, calculate, and write with it. It's not a paint program - although it has very powerful paint functions. It's not a programming language - although you can write "scripts" in English that navigate through data like Captain Cook sails through a coral reef.

Hypercard is an erector set with all the tools and parts needed to organize information the way people think - following trains of thought. And the program has a very robust search-and-sort function that allows you to find this information almost instantaneously.

As amazing as the software itself is the fact that Apple is giving it away, which could accomplish two things - increase sales and encourage the creation of new informtion systems. Hypercard is system software that comes with every Macintosh (1MB of RAM is required to run it).

Nick Sullivan



***HyperCard* consists of three disks, one of which contains the program itself. The Home Card provides a number of starting points for creating your own information system.**

SYLVIA"S CORNER

by Sylvia Hanna

I was going to try and start out this column being nonchalant, but golly I just can't! I have to let you know - if you don't know already - **I won the contest!** I actually won the DEGAS Clip-Art contest that I told you all about several months ago. The contest closed May 31st and I must admit I was afraid nothing would come of it when I heard that Batteries Included had changed hands. But I received the delightful letter from A>N>A>L>O>G>informing me that I had won first prize which was $1,000.00 and 3 software packages of my choice. I sent in three different resolutions, one a low res rose, another a high res picture of many little faces that I called "Emotions" and the medium res screen of a little snake that I call "Fred". In all honesty I don't know which one they chose as the winner, but I feel quite sure it was Fred as I included another 5 screens showing what you could do with a little snake like Fred. Entering was fun but winning is simply fantastic..

The list of winners will be on page 76 of the September issue of ST-LOG and they will put the winning pictures in the October issue if they have room. To the right is a very squished-down sample of the basic clip-art, the one I used to make all the other screens from. I hope it doesn't turn out plaid when it gets printed with the laser printer like the little elephant did a couple of months ago. I guess most of you know I work for Camosun College. They were all quite excited for me too and I was interviewed for both CAMAS Magazine and the Camosunews.. They haven't come out yet so I don't know what they have said but I'm quite anxious to read them as you might imagine. The money was great of course but the honour of being chosen and getting to read my name in the ST-LOG is one of the biggest thrills of my life.

Gerry and I are planning a vacation to Florida in December seeing as how I have enough for the plane fare and some spending money for when we are there besides. I am really looking forward to Disney World and the Epcot Center.. The only damper is that nasty new gun law they have down there, I only hope the kind of people who would go to Disney World are not the kind of people who would pack guns around.

I should have settled back down from my win and be back to earth by December .

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NEXT MEETING

Will be held on Tuesday, **November 3rd, 1987.** It will be at the Saanich Library from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

VISTA, 920 Rowils Cres., Victoria, B.C. V9B 2M7